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MURRIETA

Home (away from home) for the holiday

PHOTOS BY FRANK BELLINO — STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Marine Pfc. Ryan Nguyen, 18, from St. Louis digs into the turkey during Thanksgiving dinner at Murrieta resident Sharon Boll's home.

Twenty-three families host 55 Marines from Camp Pendleton for a Thanksgiving dinner

By Shane Newell
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They may not have spent the holiday at home, but 55 Camp Pendleton Marines got all the comforts of a homemade feast on Thanksgiving in Murrieta.

Twenty-three families in the Colony senior community opened their doors to a busload of service members to share dinner, conversation and the joy of the season.

"It's a marvelous feeling you have to have them here," said Sharon Boll, the Murrieta resident who organized this year's event. "It's the first time they've been away from home on a holiday like that."

This is the second year a bus has brought Marines from Camp Pendleton to Murrieta.

Before heading back to the base, the Marines received gift bags from Barons Market.

Marine Pvt. Brandon Zamora, 18, from Sacramento shares in a toast.

Marine Pvt. Austin Wellhouse, 18, of Wisconsin talks with Carol Porter of Murrieta.

AMBOY

'MAD' MIKE SET TO SOAR

Self-taught rocket maker counting down to Saturday when he plans to launch himself over Mojave ghost town, travel 500 mph

By Pat Graham
The Associated Press

The countdown to launch creeps closer and there's still plenty for self-taught rocket maker "Mad" Mike Hughes to do: Last-second modifications to his vehicle. Pick up his flight suit. Leave enough food for his four cats — just in case anything happens.

Hughes is a 61-year-old limo driver who has spent the past few years building a steam-powered rocket out of salvage parts in his garage. His project has cost him $20,000, which includes Rust-Oleum paint to fancy it up and a motor home he bought on Craigslist that he converted into a ramp.

His first test of the rocket will also be the launch date — Saturday — when he straps into his homemade contraption and attempts to hurtle over the ghost town of Amboy. He will travel about a mile at a speed of roughly 500 mph.

"If you're not scared to death, you're an idiot," Hughes said of his plan. "It's scary as hell, but none of us are getting out of this world alive. I like to do extraordinary things that no one else can do, and no one in the history of mankind has designed, built and launched himself in his own rocket.

"I'm a walking reality show."

The daredevil/limousine driver has been called a little bit of everything over his career — eccentric, quirky, foolhardy. Doesn't

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MIKE HUGHES VIA THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

"If you're not scared to death, you're an idiot," limousine driver Mike Hughes said of his plan to launch himself in this rocket over Amboy.

MILITARY

New Reaper drone training facility sought for March ARB

Bills advance for base upgrades to teach pilots for missions flown by Air National Guard wing

By Jeff Horseman
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More room to train drone pilots at March Air Reserve Base is part of a bill passed by the House of Representatives earlier this month.

Rep. Calvert

Rep. Takano

A provision in the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2018, which passed by a 356-70 vote Nov. 14, allows construction of a new training facility at March for pilots learning to fly the MQ-9 Reaper unmanned aerial vehicle. The bill awaits President Donald Trump's signature.

The project still needs funding in the upcoming federal budget. Rep. Ken Calvert, R-Corona, got $15 million for the project into a military spending bill approved by the House appropriations committee in June.

That bill still needs to clear the House and Senate before it can be signed by the president.

"Increasing the capacity for training remote-piloted aircraft pilots at March

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DOWNTOWN TRADITION

STAFF FILE PHOTO

Families take photos at last year's Festival of Lights switch-on ceremony at The Mission Inn Hotel and Spa in Riverside.

Riverside's 25th Festival of Lights to glow tonight

The Festival of Lights begins its 25th year in downtown Riverside today with 5 million bulbs adorning The Mission Inn Hotel and Spa, fireworks and hitmaker Kenny Loggins. And that's just the opening day.

As the event, starting at 4:30 p.m., grows increasingly popular, we've put together the ultimate list of tips on how to maximize your enjoyment, including where to nosh and where to park.

And there's more than just the lights to see. Look inside the special section in **SPOTLIGHT** for your guide to the Riverside event.

INSIDE

Tree trimming
More than 50 Christmas trees are on display through Sunday at Riverside's Festival of Trees for a good cause. **LOCAL**

Lumos!
Visitors may come under the spell of "The Magic of Christmas at Hogwarts Castle," the new holiday light show in the Wizarding World of Harry Potter at Universal Studios Hollywood. **SPOTLIGHT**

WEATHER

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Riverside

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Full weather forecast » PAGE A10

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